



News Release

Release No. 62-08

Point of Contact: Jackie Taylor, 314-331-8625
Public Affairs Contact: Alan Dooley, 314-331-8002

For Release: **IMMEDIATE** – November 3, 2008

1222 Spruce Street, St. Louis, MO, 63103-2833 www.mvs.usace.army.mil

Carbon Monoxide: The Silent Killer

Saint Louis - Carbon Monoxide (CO) is a colorless, tasteless, and odorless gas that recently brought a tragic end to the lives of boaters on the Mississippi River and at Lake Shelbyville in Illinois.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers encourages boaters to be aware of this silent and invisible killer on the water. The following safety information describes where carbon monoxide poisoning can accumulate onboard a vessel, how to spot the symptoms of poisoning, and the steps you can take to prevent carbon monoxide buildup while boating.

Why is Carbon Monoxide so dangerous?

Carbon Monoxide can accumulate anywhere in or around a boat regardless of what type of boat you have. It can also remain in or around a boat at dangerous levels even if the engine is no longer running. The colorless, tasteless, and odorless gas enters a victim's bloodstream through the lungs, blocking oxygen and preventing the body from properly functioning. Prolonged exposure to small concentrations or sudden exposures to high concentrations are equally lethal. Early symptoms of carbon monoxide poisoning include eye irritation, headache, nausea, weakness, and dizziness. These symptoms are often confused with seasickness or intoxication so those affected may not receive needed medical attention before it becomes fatal.

Common Carbon Monoxide sources onboard vessels include:

- Engines
- Gas Generators
- Cooking Ranges
- Space & water heaters

- MORE -

Protecting Yourself & Others

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recommends that boaters take the following steps to protect themselves and others from the dangers of carbon monoxide:

- Install and maintain carbon monoxide detectors on and inside the boat. Do not ignore the alarms and replace as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Maintain a fresh circulation of air through and around the boat at all times.
- Treat symptoms of seasickness as possible carbon monoxide poisoning and quickly get the victim to a well ventilated area.
- Avoid any area of the boat where exhaust fumes may be present. If exhaust fumes are detected on the vessel take immediate action to ventilate the affected area.

More information concerning carbon monoxide poisoning can be found by visiting the U.S. Coast Guard website at <http://www.uscgboating.org/command/co.htm>